

Cap'n Warren's Wards

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

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CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

His niece was expecting him. She had anticipated his visit and was prepared for it. From the emotion caused by his departure after the eventful birthday she had entirely recovered or thought she had. Stephen's ridicule and Mrs. Corcoran Dunn's congratulations on riddance from the "encumbrance" shamed her and stilled the reproaches of her conscience. Mrs. Dunn, as always, played the diplomat and mingled just the proper quantity of comprehending sympathy with the congratulations.

"I understand exactly how you feel, my dear," she said. "You have a tender heart, and it pains you to hurt any one's feeling, no matter how much they deserve to be hurt. You feel that you may have been too harsh with that guardian of yours. You remember what you said to him and forget how hypocritically he behaved toward you. I can't forgive him that. I may forget how he misrepresented Malcolm and me to you—that I may even pardon in time—but to deceive his own brother's children and introduce into their society a creature who had slandered and maligned their father—that I never shall forget or forgive. And you'll excuse my frankness, dear—you should never forget or forgive it either. You were a brave girl, and if you are not proud of yourself I am proud of you."

So when her uncle was announced Caroline was ready. She entered the library and acknowledged his greeting with a distant bow. He regarded her kindly, but his manner was grave.

"Well, Caroline," he began, "I got your letter."

"Yes, I presumed you did."

"Um-hm. I got it. It didn't surprise me what you wrote, because I'd seen the news in the papers, but I was hopin' you'd tell me yourself, and I'm real glad you did. I'm much obliged to you."

"I gave you my reasons for writing," she said. "Although I do not consider that I am in any sense duty bound to refer matters other than financial to you; and, although my feelings toward you have not changed—still, you are my guardian, and—"

"I understand. So you're really engaged to Mr. Dunn?"

"Yes."

"And you're cal-latin' to marry him?"

"One might almost take that for granted," impatiently.

"Almost, yes. Not always, but generally, I will give in. You're goin' to marry Malcolm Dunn. Why?"

"Why, because I choose, I suppose."

"Um-hm! Are you sure of that?"

"Am I sure?" indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean are you sure that it's because you choose, or because he does, or maybe because his mother does?"

She turned angrily away. "If you came here to insult me"—she began. He interrupted her.

"No, no!" he protested gently. "Insultin' you is the last thing I want to do. But, as your father did put you in my charge, I want you to bear with me while we talk this over together. Remember, Caroline, I ain't bothered you a great deal lately. I shouldn't now if I hadn't thought 'twas necessary. So please don't get mad, but answer me this: Do you care for this man you've promised to marry?"

Enough to live with him all your life and see him every day and be to him what a true wife ought to be? See him, not with his company manners on or in his automobile, but at the breakfast table and when he comes home tired and cross maybe? When you've got to be forbearin' and forgivin' and—"

"He is one of my oldest and best friends"—she interrupted. Her uncle went on without waiting for her to end the sentence.

"I know," he said. "One of the oldest, that's sure. But friendship, 'ordin' to my notion, is somethin' so small in comparison that it hardly counts in the manifest. Married folks ought to be friends, sure, but they ought to be a whole lot more'n that. I'm an old bach, you say, and ain't had no experience. That's true, but I've been young, and there was a time when I made plans. However, she died, and it never came to nothin'. But I know what it means to be engaged, the right kind of engagement. It means that you don't count yourself at all, not a bit. You're ready, each of you, to give up all you've got—your wishes, comfort, money and what it'll buy and your life, if it should come to that, for that other one. Do you care for Malcolm Dunn like that, Caroline?"

She answered defiantly.

"Yes, I do," she said.

"You do. Well, do you think he feels the same way about you?"

"Yes." With not quite the same promptness, but still defiantly.

"You feel sartin' of it, do you?"

She stamped her foot. "Yes, yes, yes!" she cried. "Oh, do say what you came to say and end it!"

Her uncle rose to his feet.

"Why, I guess likely I've said it," he observed. "When two people care for each other like that they ought to be married, and the sooner the better. I knew that you'd been lonesome and

troubled, maybe, and all I can say is that I'm awful glad for you. God bless you, my dear! I hope you'll be as happy as the day is long."

His niece gazed at him, bewildered and incredulous. This she had not expected.

"Thank you," she stammered. "I did not know—I thought—"

"Of course you did—of course. Well, then, Caroline, I guess that's all. I won't trouble you any longer. Good-by."

He turned toward the door, but stopped, hesitated and turned back again.

"There is just one thing more," he said solemnly. "I don't know's I ought to speak, but—I want to—and I'm goin' to. And I want you to believe it! I do want you to!"

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Why—why, just this, Caroline. This is a tough old world we live in. Things don't always go on in it as we think they'd ought to. Trouble comes to everybody, and when it looks right sometimes it turns out to be all wrong. If—"

if there should come a time like that to you and Steve, I want you to remember that you've got me to turn to. No matter what you think of me, what folks have made you think of me, what I remember that I'm waitin' and ready

to help you all I can. Any time I'm ready—and glad. Just remember that, won't you, because— Well, there! Goodby, goodby!"

He hurried away. She stood gazing after him, astonished, a little frightened and not a little disturbed and touched. His emotion was so evident, his attitude toward her engagement was so different from that which she had anticipated, and there was something in his manner which she could not understand. He had acted as if he pitied her. Why? It could not be because she was to marry Malcolm Dunn. If it were that she resented his pity of course. But it could not be that, because he had given her his blessing. What was it? Was there something else—something that she did not know and he did? Why was he so kind and forbearing and patient?

All her old doubts and questionings returned. She had resolutely kept them from her thoughts, but they had been there, in the background, always. When, after the long siege, she had at least yielded and said "yes" to Malcolm she felt that that question at least was settled. She would marry him. Had not Mrs. Dunn told her over and over again what a good son he was and what a kind heart he had and how he worshiped her? Oh, she ought to be a very happy girl! Of course she was happy. But why had her uncle looked at her as he did? And what did he mean by hinting that when things looked right they sometimes were all wrong? She wished Malcolm was with her then; she needed him.

She heard the clang of the elevator door; then the bell rang furiously. She heard Evans hasten to answer. Then, to her amazement, she heard her brother's voice.

"Caroline!" demanded Stephen. "Caroline! Where are you?"

He burst into the room, still wearing his coat and hat and carrying a traveling bag in his hand.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "you're all right then! You are all right, aren't you?"

"All right? Why shouldn't I be all right? What do you mean? And why are you here?"

"Why am I here?" he repeated.

"Yes. Why did you come from New Haven?"

"Why, because I got the telegram, of course! You expected me to come, didn't you?"

"I expected you? Telegram? What telegram?"

"Why, the—Good Lord, Caro, what are you talking about? Didn't you know they telegraphed me to come home at once? I've pretty near broke my neck, and the taxicab man's, getting here from the station. I thought you must be very ill or something worse."

"They telegraphed you to come here? Who—Edwards, you may take Mr. Warren's things to his room."

When they were alone she turned again to her brother.

"Now, Steve," she said, "sit down and tell me what you mean. Who telegraphed you?"

"Why, old Sylvester, father's lawyer. I've got the message here somewhere. No, never mind; I've lost it, I guess. He wired me to come home as early as possible this morning. Said it was very important. And you didn't know anything about it?"

"No, not a thing."

Steve hastened to call upon Sylvester and from him learned sufficient to grasp the fact that he and Caroline were practically penniless. This he imparted to his sister, but unknown to her he visited the captain and talked over with him the probable effect the situation would have upon the Dunns. He was anxious that Malcolm should be kept to his promise.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Unmasking of the Dunns.

CAROLINE sat by the library window, her chin in her hand, dreading watching the elect as it beat against the panes and the tops of the park trees lashing in the wind.

Stephen uttered an exclamation. "Some one's at the door," he explained. "It's Sylvester, of course. I'll let him in."

It was not the lawyer, but a messenger-boy with a note. Stephen returned to the library with the missive in his hand.

"He couldn't get here, Caro," he said excitedly. "Wants us to come right down to his office. Come! Rush! It may be important."

The cab made good time, and they soon reached the Pine street offices.

"Hope he doesn't keep us waiting long," Steve fumed. "I thought, of course, he was ready or he wouldn't have sent for us."

"Ready?" His sister looked at him questioningly. "Ready for what?" she repeated, with sudden suspicion. "Steve, do you know what Mr. Sylvester wishes to see us about?"

Her brother colored and seemed a bit disconcerted.

"See here, Caro," he said, "maybe I do know something, or I can guess. Now, whatever happens, you've got to be a sensible girl. Somebody in the family must use common sense, and when it comes to holding a person to a promise then—confound it, Steve, we can't starve, can we?"

"What do you mean?" She rose and advanced toward him. "Where do you mean by a promise? What has he been doing?"

"I haven't done anything," he stammered—"that is, I've done what any reasonable fellow would do. I'm not the only one who thinks. Look here, we've got a guardian, haven't we?"

"A guardian! A guardian! Stephen Warren, have you been to him? Have you—was that where you were last night? Why did you go to him? What did you say?"

"I said—I said—never mind what I said. He agrees with me, I can tell you that. You'll thank your stars I did go before very long. I—ah, here's Sylvester!"

The door of the room opened. The person who entered, however, was not the lawyer, but the very man of whom they had been speaking, Captain Elisha himself. He closed the door behind him.

"Hello, Steve," he said, with a nod to the boy. Then, turning to his niece, he stepped forward and held out his hand. "Caroline," he began, "I don't doubt you're surprised to see me here, but I—Why, what's the matter?"

The faces of the pair led him to ask the question. Stephen's face was red, and he looked embarrassed and guilty. Caroline's was white, and she glanced from her brother to her guardian and back again with flashing eyes.

"Captain Warren, my brother has hinted—he has said—What does he mean by holding some one to a promise? Answer me truthfully."

"I shouldn't answer you any other way, Caroline. Steve seems to be worried about the young man you're engaged to. He seems to call that Mr. Dunn may want to slip out of that engagement."

His niece looked at him. Then she turned to her brother. "You want to him and—Oh, how could you?"

Stephen would not meet her gaze.

"Well," he muttered rebelliously, "why wouldn't I? You know yourself that Mal hasn't been near you since it happened. If he wasn't after—if he was straight, he would have come, wouldn't he?"

"Stop!" She cut him short imperiously. "Don't make me hate you. And you," turning to her uncle, "did you listen and believe such things? Oh, I know what you think of my friends! I heard it from your own lips. And I know why you think it. Because they know what you are, because they exposed you there!"

"There, there! Caroline, you needn't go on. I've heard your opinion of my character afore. Never mind me for the minute. And, if you'll remember, I ain't said that I doubted your young man. You told me that you thought the world and all of him and that he did of you. That's enough—or ought to be. But your brother says you wrote him two days ago and he ain't been near you."

"I misdirected the letter. He didn't receive it."

"Um-hm. I see. That would explain."

"Of course it would. That must be the reason. Do you suppose if he were

as poor as—as I am that I would desert him? You know I wouldn't. I should be glad—yes, almost happy—because then I could show him—could—"

Her voice faltered. She put her handkerchief to her eyes for an instant and then snatched it away and faced them, her head erect. The pride in her face was reflected in Captain Elisha's as he regarded her.

"No, no," he said gently. "I never supposed you'd act but in one way, Caroline. I knew you. If Malcolm's what he'd ought to be, I said, he'll be glad of the chance to prove how much he cares for you. But Steve appeared to have some misgivin', and so it seemed to me that his doubts ought to be settled. And," rising as there came a tap at the door, "I callate they're goin' to be."

He walked briskly over and opened the door. Sylvester was standing without, and with him were Mrs. Corcoran Dunn and Malcolm.

They were past the sill before Captain Elisha's greeting caused them to turn and see the three already there. Mrs. Dunn, who was in the lead, stopped short in her majestic though creeping march of entrance, and her florid face turned a brighter crimson. Her son, strolling languidly at her heels, started violently and dropped his hat.

Mrs. Dunn had come to the offices of Sylvester, Kuhn & Graves at the senior partner's request to be told, as she supposed, the full and final details of the financial disaster threatening the Warren family. If those details should prove the disaster as overwhelming as it appeared, then—well, then, certain disagreeable duties must be performed. But to meet the girl to whom her son was engaged and her brother and her guardian thus unexpectedly and unprepared was enough, to shake the composure and nerve of even such a veteran campaigner as Mrs. M. Corcoran Dunn.

But of the three to whom the meeting was an absolute surprise—Caroline, Malcolm and herself—she was characteristically the first to regain outward serenity.

"My dear child!" she cried. "My dear girl! I'm so glad to see you! I've thought of you so much! And I pity you so. Poor Malcolm has—Malcolm," sharply, "come here! Don't you see Caroline?"

Malcolm was groping nervously for his hat. He picked it up and obeyed his mother's summons, though with a great sigh.

"How do you do, Caroline?" he stammered confusedly. "I—I—it's a deuce of a surprise to see you down here. The matter and I didn't expect—that is, we scarcely hoped to meet any one but Sylvester. He sent for us, you know."

He extended his hand. She did not take it.

"Did you get my letter?" she asked quickly.

"Yes—er—yes, I got it, Caroline. I—by Jove, you know?"

Captain Elisha stepped forward.

"Excuse me for interruptin', ma'am," he said, addressing the ruffled matron, "but Mr. Sylvester told me you and your son had an appointment with him for this afternoon. Now, there was something that we—or I, anyhow—wanted to talk with you about, so I

thought you might as well make one job of it. Sylvester's a pretty busy man, and I know he has other things to attend to, so why not let him go ahead and tell you what you come to hear, and then we can take up the other part by ourselves. Ain't that a good idea?"

"I—we did have an appointment with Mr. Sylvester," Mrs. Dunn admitted reluctantly, "but the business was not important. And," haughtily, "I do not care to discuss it here."

The captain opened his eyes. "Hey!" he exclaimed. "Not important? 'Twas about the real size of your father's estate, Caroline," turning to the girl. "I thought Mrs. Dunn and Mr. Malcolm must think 'twas important, for I understand they've been telephonin' and askin' for appointments for the last two days. As to discussin' it here," he went on with bland innocence, "why we're all family folks, same as I said and there ain't any secrets between us on that subject. Heave ahead, Mr. Sylvester."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Trusting the Lord

By REV. B. B. SUTCLIFFE
Extension Department, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago

TEXT—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.—Jer. 17:8.

The blessedness of this text is for both sinner and saint. The sinner has nothing to do for salvation but simply trust the Lord, and the saint has nothing more to do for satisfaction. The great obstacle to blessedness is man's evil heart of unbelief. The sin that is common to all men is the besetting sin of unbelief keeping the sinner from salvation and likewise the saint from satisfaction.

The word "trust" has several meanings. In Psalms 2:12, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." It means to have confidence in the Lord as the Ruler or King. Not long ago a man held the high-sounding title of his majesty, earl of all the Russias. As such many put their trust in him. But he lost the high place and became merely Nicholas Romanoff without power to aid those who trusted him. But the one who trusts the Lord as Ruler and King has One whose title and throne is established forever.

In Ruth 2:12, Boaz speaking to Ruth concerning the Lord, says: "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." Here the word means "to find a refuge." It reminds one of the high winds and mounting waves threatening to engulf a laboring ship. But battered and blown, she comes tumbling over the harbor bar out of the stormy seas to the calm and safety of her refuge.

Or it reminds of the mother bird calling her young at the approach of an enemy and gathering them to safety under her protecting wings. So the saint upon life's stormy sea may find a refuge under the wings of the Almighty. Safety and rest from all storms and all enemies are his by simply trusting the Lord.

A slightly different meaning of the word is found in Psalms 55:3, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." Here it means "to lean on." The psalmist found himself surrounded by enemies. None came to his support. There seemed no help for him. Tired and weary in the unequal struggle his soul cried out for some one to lean on and to gather strength from. Facing the surrounding enemies alone the fear of failure and defeat gripped him until relief came by trusting in the Lord or leaning on his God. Perhaps, my reader, there is no way out of your difficulties, but there is a way over, and you may tread that way by leaning on your Lord. Trust him, lean upon him, and the harder you lean the more you please him.

Another meaning of the word is in Psalms 22:8. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." It means here, "He rolled himself on the Lord." This psalm foretells the experience of our Lord upon the cross. He was there forsaken and alone. Even his God seemed to have left him and his followers had fled. His enemies rejoiced in his sorrow. The blackness of midnight gloom settled upon him. But then in spite of themselves, his enemies gave voice in this way to satisfaction. He could roll himself on the Lord. This is his desire for his people today. There may not be strength to rise and walk to him, but there is always power to roll oneself upon the Lord, to trust him and trusting, find that he not only carries the burden but the believer as well.

Still another meaning of the word is in Job 35:14, where it means "to stay upon." Job could not understand why such grievous sorrow and loss should be his. He desired to find the Almighty and plead with him, but God appeared to hide from him. How often it is so with Christians. They walk in sorrow's path and troubles spring out on every side. They pray, but the heavens seem as brass. They cry to God, but he appears to have forgotten them. They search to find the cause and can find none. Darkness surrounds them. What can they do? As Job did, and doing found complete satisfaction, simply trust or stay upon his God.

Glory of the Christ Child.

Christ on this festival honors infants, consecrates suffering, holds up to us the minds of little children, and it is another radiance and beauty added to the manger throne of Bethlehem, that from it streams the gospel of the poor, the gospel of the lonely, the gospel of the sick, the lost, the afflicted, the gospel of little children. The wisdom of Greece and Rome could only spare at this time a push, or a threat, or a curse, which said to the little, the poor, the weak, depart; get you out of the way; it was left for the glorious Gospel of the Blessed Lord to say: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God."—W. C. E. Newbolt.

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The blessedness of this text is for both sinner and saint. The sinner has nothing to do for salvation but simply trust the Lord, and the saint has nothing more to do for satisfaction. The great obstacle to blessedness is man's evil heart of unbelief. The sin that is common to all men is the besetting sin of unbelief keeping the sinner from salvation and likewise the saint from satisfaction.

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